Montana Planning News

from the Montana State Library

This cover sheet created by Internet Archive for formatting.

1
MPN
1978

Montana State Library
3 0864 1004 3175 1

MONTANA PLANNING NEWS September 1978
Department of Community Affairs Planning Division

DOT Wants To Cut One Amtrak Route In State

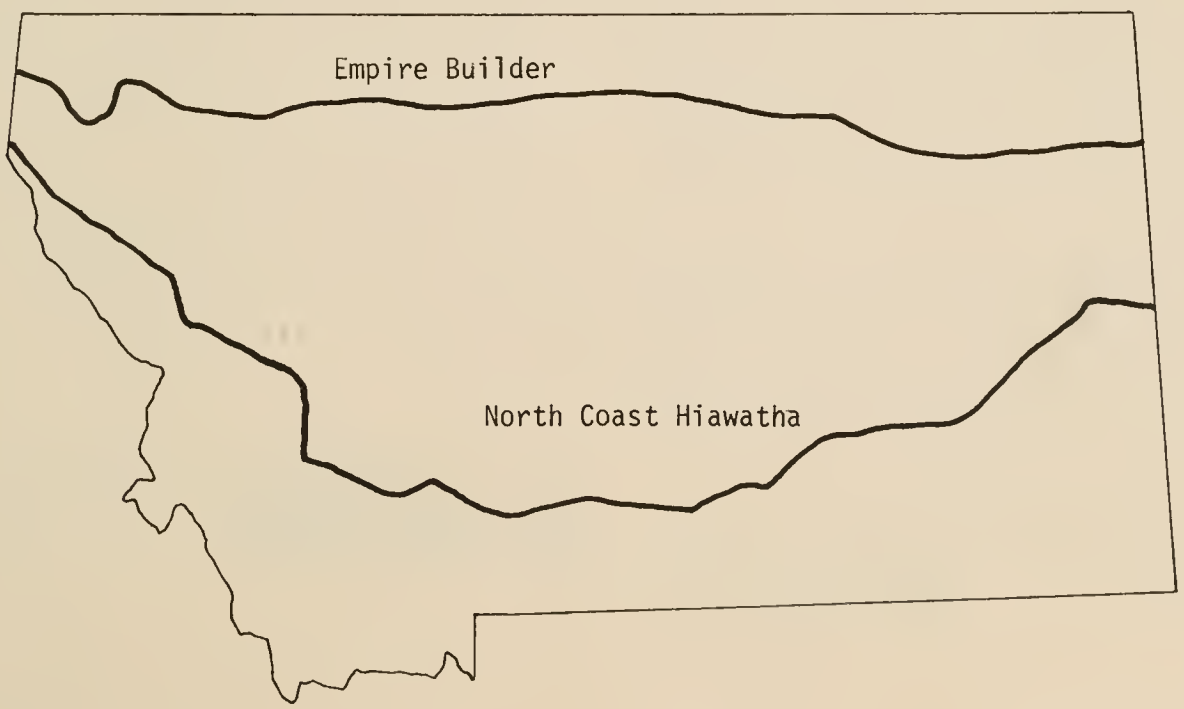
The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) wants to make the Amtrack rail system cheaper to operate . . . and that may mean a serious cut in Montana's passenger rail service.

According to DOT's newsletter **Consumer Transtopics**, Congress would have to subsidize Amtrak $1 billion a year if it continues on its present course. With rate changes proposed by DOT, this subsidy would be $800 million, a savings of $200 million. And, DOT points out, this would still serve 160 metropolitan areas, including the 36 largest cities in the U.S.; still provide daily coast-to-coast service; eliminate less profitable routes and allow Amtrak to improve service "on those routes that show promise."

Apparently, only one of Amtrak's two passenger routes through Montana "shows promise," because the DOT proposes eliminating either the Empire Builder route through northern Montana or the North Coast Hiawatha route through southern Montana.

Two public hearings in Butte and Havre found little support for the route charges. Governor Tom Judge called the cuts unnecessary and an "impulsive reaction" by DOT. AFL-CIO leader Jim Murry complained the route elimination would mean the loss of up to $1.5 million in paychecks each year. State Representative Dorothy Bradley of Bozeman argued that other transportation systems are

(Continued on p. 2)



MPN "Retracks" Routing Error

We want to thank Representative Art Shelden of Libby, who called DCA Planning Division to correct an error in our article on the GATX Tank Train Proposal in the August MPN. Since the construction of Libby Dam, the Burlington Northern route no longer goes directly from Libby to Eureka. Instead, it now dips south near Libby and rejoins the old line at Stryker. Therefore, the crude oil unit trains would not travel along Lake Koocanusa or the Tobacco River.

26 Federal Newsletters

You may have suspected the federal government puts out a lot of publications each year. But you'll never know just how many unless you subscribe to one (or more) of the 26 weekly newsletters it takes just to provide short descriptions of each publication.

The newsletters come from the National Technical Information Service of the U.S. Department of Commerce. NTIS would be happy to keep you informed of recent government publications in any of the 26 fields it publishes abstract newsletters. That includes Administration, Agriculture and Food, Energy, Environmental Pollution and Control, Health Planning, Natural Resources and Earth Sciences, Problem-Solving Information for State and Local Governments and Transportation.

Subscriptions don't come cheap; they start at $50 per year. But, as NTIS points out, this puts you in close touch with the most current information from the federal government. In fact, claims NTIS, ". . . in the next 12 months almost 70,000 new technical publications will be released by more than 350 Federal agencies and their contractors. This represents an estimated $17 billion or more invested in detailed research and analysis . . . ."

For more information and an order form, contact the NTIS, U.S. Dept. of Commerce, 5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield, VA 22161.

Amtrak Route Cuts (continued)

much more heavily subsidized than the railroads, and called the proposal shortsighted for ignoring the energy efficiency of rail travel.

Many other legislators, business representatives and citizens criticized the cutbacks. The sole support came from two spokesmen from bus companies, one of whom said: ". . . passenger train service is more nostalgic than anything else. Bus service is willing to serve the public so long as it does not have to compete against a federally subsidized business where the federal government keeps pumping dollars into a sinking ship."

DOT plans to revise the plan based on public comments and submit a recommended plan to Congress for approval. If approved, the route changes could take effect July 1, 1979.

If you'd like to know more about the DOT proposal, ask for the report "A Reexamination of the Amtrak Route Structure, available free from the Federal Railroad Administration, Office of Public Affairs, Washington, D.C. 20590. DOT asks that you include a self-addressed mailing label with your request.

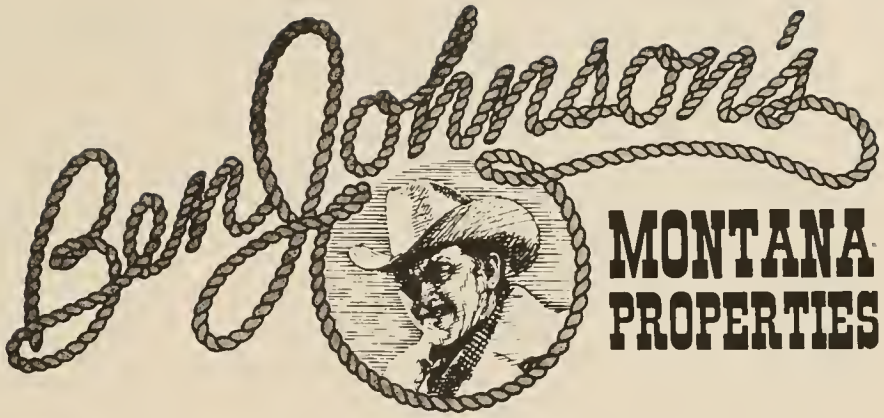
Montana Planning News **September 1978**
Volume 1 **Number 7**

The Montana Planning News is published each month by the Planning Division of the Montana Department of Community Affairs. There is no subscription charge. To get on our mailing list, write to the Montana Planning News, DCA Planning Division, Capitol Station, Helena, MT 59601 or call (406) 449-3757.

We welcome responses to articles, reader letters and article suggestions.

This publication is financed in part by a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development under the provisions of Section 701 of the Housing Act of 1954, as amended.

High Water Sinks Star's Subdivision



It may have been the splashiest promotion ever for a subdivision in Montana. Two thousand eager guests munched roast buffalo, mingled with celebrities Dub and Buck Taylor, Steve Ford (son of former President Gerald Ford) and Academy-award winner Ben Johnson, and viewed the 184 single-acre lots of Ben Johnson's Troutdale Subdivision. Seventy-two guests even put down deposits on lots, which ranged in price from $6,900 to $8,900.

But all that may have been in vain. One week after the party, the Madison County Commissioners unanimously rejected plans for the subdivision, citing problems with high ground water on some of the lots.

Ben Johnson and the other Troutdale developers were dismayed, to say the least. They immediately offered to return the deposits of the 72 prospective lot buyers, since they could not sell the lots without county approval; reportedly all 72 hung on to their parcels. They also revised the Troutdale plat to eliminate the problem-causing parcels, and resubmitted the plat with 124 parcels shown on it to the County Commissioners. The Commissioners must again vote to approve, reject or conditionally approve Troutdale.

But high ground water may cause the downfall of the movie star's development a second time. A letter from the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology points out the potential for contamination of drinking water by septic tanks even within the revised Troutdale plat. The letter says: "In a broad area covering the northeastern part of the subdivision, ground water is too shallow for safe operation of septic systems."

The 124-lot preliminary plat would just be the start of the Troutdale development; Johnson and his partners own an additional 2,300 acres of land. But roasted buffalo and celebrities notwithstanding, Troutdale is stalled in midstream until it receives county approval.

Public Service

Reprinted from Stop Me Before I Plan Again by Richard Hedman
© 1977 by the American Society of Planning Officials, 1313 E. 60th St., Chicago, IL 60637

PSC Proposes Rule on Standby Fee

Utilities won't be able to charge higher rates to alternative energy users than they charge their regular customers, if the Public Service Commission adopts a rule it has proposed. The PSC will probably hold a public hearing on that rule this fall.

The controversy started when the Montana Power Company filed a request for a rate increase and included a monthly minimum fee or "standby charge" customers who installed alternative energy systems would have to pay to have MPC power available as a backup system. The charge would have applied to users of solar, wind and other "exotic" forms of energy. There was some question whether it would have applied to those who used wood stoves for home heating.

MPC claimed that it incurred certain costs just maintaining hookups for alternative energy users, costs that could not be recovered without a standby charge.

However, the PSC received a large volume of mail from the public, reportedly all of it opposing the standby charge. Opponents refuted MPC's claim that alternative energy users weren't paying their fair share, and claimed the standby charge would discourage energy conservation and renewable energy efforts.

In issuing its proposed rule, the PSC agreed with the opponents that MPC had not provided proof of additional costs. But the rule would leave the door open for MPC or another utility to prove it incurred extra costs and then request a standby charge.

The PSC must vote whether or not to make the proposed rule final after hearing public comment.

MAP Meets

The final arrangements have been made for the Montana Association of Planners' fall conference on "Growth Management: Land Use Controls and Legal Issues."

Highlights will include talks by Dr. Robert Freilich of the University of Missouri Law School, presentations on agricultural land classification and conservation and a panel discussion on Montana planning issues.

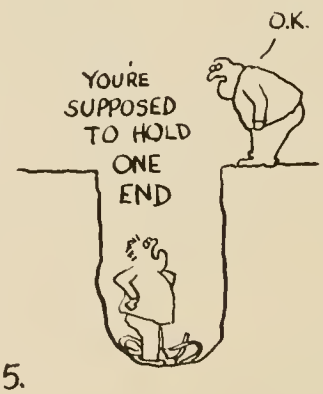
The conference will take place at the Ramada Inn in Bozeman on September 27-29. MAP has reserved rooms at both the Ramada and the Thrifty Scot until September 15. For advanced registration, room reservation and more information, contact Byron Roberts, MAP Treasurer, DCA Planning Division, Capitol Station, Helena, MT 59601/449-3757.

About the Insert

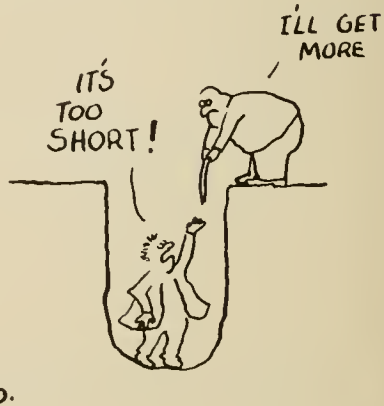
Montana's satellite mapping program (May 1978 MPN: "NASA Satellite to Scan Montana") has been attracting attention from all parts of the U.S.. In fact, the lead article in the second issue of the NASA newsletter Plain Brown Wrapper was about the Montana project.

NASA kindly provided us with reprints of the article, so we're inserting them in this issue of MPN to give you a little more information about satellite mapping in Montana. But if you really are interested and want to keep up-to-date in the satellite mapping field, you should get a free subscription to the bimonthly Plain Brown Wrapper. Write to NASA WRAP, Mail Stop 242-4, Ames Research Center, Moffett Field, CA 94035.

4.



5.



6.

Reprinted from Aug./Sept. issue of Plain Brown Wrapper, newsletter of NASA's Western Regional Applications Program.

Landsat Takes a Look at Big Sky Country

Montana Launches Four Projects with WRAP

"Seventeen of us are working together in this. We're state, local, and federal agencies, but we're all interested in the same thing: finding out whether Landsat can help us take a good, hard look at west central Montana," says Tom Dundas of Montana's Department of Community Affairs. "We've already launched four demonstration projects with WRAP. By this time next year, we should know whether satellite data can really help us manage our resources . . . and how well it will fit into different agencies' digital data systems."

Focussing on four resources within a 26,000-square-mile test area between Great Falls and Bozeman, the demonstration projects will: inventory dams, reservoirs, and water bodies, for dam safety assessment; identify classes of agricultural lands, for tax valuation, and delineate irrigated lands; determine type and extent of forest lands around Bozeman, again for tax assessment and resource inventory; and classify land use in Cascade County as an aid to county and local planning.

WRAP's role is to furnish the satellite imagery, train the Montana participants, and help them to classify the Landsat data on an Ames computer; the Montana people will carry out the ground checks necessary. NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory will lend a big hand by interfacing the Landsat imagery to a central state digital system, and will do data pre-processing and summarization.

Landsat May Link Digital Data Bases. Taking the lead in the projects are the Water Resources and Forestry Divisions for the Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation, the Dept. of Revenue, and the Cascade County Planning Board. The Dept. of Community Affairs has an interest in all of them. Dundas, assistant administrator of DCA's Research and Information Division, put the venture together; he'll continue to oversee it with an eye toward integrating the results into his division's Montana Geo-Data System, a computer data bank integrating social, economic, and natural resources information.

"Like the other agencies, we see the Landsat data as one more overlay to our present system. But that's not all. While each agency will use its own digital system in the demonstrations, this project will give us a chance to start interfacing all our systems, with Landsat as the common link. At DCA, of course, we'll be integrating data from all the projects . . . and we'd like to go beyond that; we'd like to see our GeoData System as the common linking system state-wide."

Why Landsat Now? The Montana agencies' optimism about their utility of Landsat data is a fairly recent development. Dundas and his staff have kept an eye on the satellite's information potential since 1972, even visiting the EROS Data Center in 1974; they came back convinced they couldn't handle the necessary digital processing. "In addition," comments Dundas, "we received a widely-distibuted letter in early '77 from the IAFHE Remote Sensing Lab at the Univ. of Minnesota, in which they pointed out the limitations and uncertainty of Landsat information without the most extensive ground verification survey. They cited an example in which a thematic map for an Appalachian region showed the shadowed sides of mountains to be the same classification as water! Certainly we were a little skeptical after a few horror stories like that one."

But continued exposure to Landsat information, improved processing techniques, and results from other projects gradually convinced the Montana state agencies and counties that the time was right to give Landsat a try. WRAP's Ben Padrick and the EROS Data Center's Don Lauer led the way to Helena in early '77; a larger team from WRAP followed up in September, talking to some 35 representatives of state and local agencies, gathered together by Dundas. Two other meetings took place in the next few months, including a "basic training" session for 60 agency people by WRAP's Robin Welch and Chuck Poulton. Says Mike McCormick, WRAP's liaison officer and a continuing representative from Washington to the task force guiding the three-year-old Landsat project in the Pacific Northwest: "It was easy to see that the Montana people got the most out of hearing about other users' stories . . . successful or otherwise."

Deciding on Projects: A Group Effort. In late January of '78, demo project discussions began in earnest between Montana agency people and McCormick, Dr. Nevin Bryant of JPL, and Bob Wrigley, who had by then been named WRAP's coordinator for Montana. Sixteen project proposals were submitted for technical review by Wrigley, with final evaluation by Dundas. After four projects had been selected, another advanced planning meeting took place in Helena — this time including Ethel Bauer and Dave Peterson of WRAP, both of whom had been coordinators of PNW demonstrations, Bauer in agricultural lands, Peterson in forestry.

The group set the original start date for the four demos at April 1st, then moved initial digital processing back when satellite imagery failed to arrive on time from Goddard. Training of the Montana participants would take place in several segments, the group decided, some of it in Montana, in conjunction with Montana State Univ., and some at Ames, where computer facilities would be available. In the first week-long session held 12-16 June at Montana State Univ., MSU's Joseph Ashley shared the teaching load with Robin Welch, Bob Wrigley, and Don Card, also from WRAP. Wrigley points out that the session's field trip utilized a specially-ordered Landsat scene — an edge-enhanced, contrast-stretched image of the Bozeman area, as well as high-altitude and conventional aerial photography. The combination gave the 15-man training group a multi-stage look at the actual area some of them would be working on. "We learned what to expect," says Dundas of the training, "and what to be careful of. We saw a new emphasis on ground truth and statistical sampling . . . and we didn't get any oversell."

Better Land Use Info "a Necessity". To Community Affairs, Natural Resources and Conservation, Revenue, and Cascade County Planning, getting involved with Landsat now is not just a question of technical conviction. It's a question of necessity. A representative of DNRC sums it up: "Every agency has state and federal mandates to inventory land use . . . for tax assessment and so forth." Dundas adds, "But in Montana, we have some added incentive. In the last legislative session (Jan. 77), two land use bills were introduced. In the session before (Jan. 75), eleven. All of them would have demanded county commissions across Montana to inventory county land use. None of those bills made it to a vote, because the manual labor involved to do those inventories would have cost too much. Now, with automated aids to land use classification, large-area inventories may be more possible. The legislature will eventually demand them. But the counties won't be able to do it themselves; the state will have to help. So now it's a question of transferring to the appropriate agencies the technology to do the inventories."

Money: a real crunch. The money to do the job hasn't stopped being a problem, though. Challenges by coal companies to the state's 30% levy on coal revenues have encumbered about $30 million of Montana's budget over the next two years. Agencies have been told they may have to cut personnel by 5%, the governors set a freeze on hiring, and operating budgets have already been slashed.

The agencies involved in Landsat demonstration projects are squeezing by on current budget dollars, without much idea of whether they'll get money to continue working with the satellite data. "We're working on borrowed time," comments one agency person. "We need some early, promising results to take to the legislature in the first quarter of '79 . . . and we don't have time to get those results."

Adds Dundas: "If we could show that an agency, or a group of them, will save time and money — without losing quality of information — because of Landsat, that might be key. We'd like to have at least some legislators who are aware of the possibilities of this tool (Landsat) as applied to legislative mandates. But, as the people in the Pacific Northwest learned, this thing takes time . . . maybe 4, 5, 6 years . . . and meanwhile, the budget crunch here will hurt us." Dundas has been keeping two legislators up to date on developments: former Sen. Terry Murphy and Sen. Larry Fasbender, both of whom attended remote sensing workshops sponsored by the National Conference of State Legislatures in late '77.

The Montana agencies are counting on one thing: that they'll be able to show legislators Landsat has the potential to help carry out legislatively-mandated tasks more accurately, faster, and, in some cases, more equitably to taxpayers.

Demo #1: looking for water. The Water Resources Div. of DNRC will lead the way in the first demonstration project, locating all dams, reservoirs, and impoundments in a 26,000 square-mile area extending from Great Falls south to Bozeman. "We've got a real problem," says Robert Clark, a design engineer with the Water Resources Div., who will coordinate the project. "Montana, like all other states, must carry out the federal dam safety assessment law. But to do that, we've got to know where all dams are . . . whether they've been erected by our agency or others.

"We have a listing of dams now, but we have no systematic way to correct it or update it. Changes or additions are found pretty much by chance, by questioning the Soil Conservation Service and other agencies, by looking at water rights applications . . . and with an occasional field check.

"So we'll do two things. The first — and this is the Landsat demonstration — is to locate all bodies of water that might have dams. Federal dam safety law requires us to locate water bodies with storage of 50 acre feet or more; but we're going to try to locate even smaller ones — with 5- to 10-acre surface areas. It won't be easy to tie the satellite data to ground coordinates for those smaller ones, but we'll try."

DNRC's objective in the Landsat demo is to gain maps and computer printouts that, in conjunction with administrative information in DCA's Geodata System and the Dept. of Revenue's township and section coordinate file, will locate water bodies by latitude and longitude, township, and section number. After updating and correcting current listings with the satellite data, DNRC will have, for the first time, an accurate base listing on which changes can be made. "We think Landsat will be especially helpful in eliminating duplicate listings," says Clark. "And where Landsat shows 'surprises', like significant water bodies we didn't know were there, we can go out into the field and check them.

"The second thing we're doing is working with an Army Corps of Engineers group out of Seattle. They're siting dams on a nationwide, one-time project; we're interested in the long term — monitoring dam locations and keeping our inventory up-to-date."

Clark thinks the information developed in the water body location project may be highly valuable to other departments, an opinion echoed by George Cawlfield, with the Centralized Services Division of DNRC, who's coordinating DNRC's efforts in the demonstrations. If Landsat is incorporated into state digital systems, Cawlfield, a systems analyst, would handle in-state processing for DNRC, along with Val Morgan, doing a similar job for Revenue. "The Water Rights people could use this, too," he says. "They don't always know where water bodies are . . . or if all of them are covered by water permits."

Demo #2: linking agriculture, water, and tax valuation. Landsat's input to water resource planning is exactly what DNRC's soil scientist Phil Threlkeld talks about when he describes the second demonstration project, which he'll co-manage with Val Morgan of the Dept. of Revenue. The project will classify agricultural lands within the same 26,000-square-mile area that Clark's project covers; ultimately, that classification may be entered into an irrigated land and crop inventory for DNRC, and a tax evaluation base for Revenue. It may also form an important layer in DNRC's water demand model.

"We need a lot of land use information throughout the state for water resource planning. DNRC is responsible for adjudication of all water rights, so we need to keep track of who's using what water. But right now we're using old records, some dating back to 1947, that are very inaccurate about who had water rights before '73. (Prior to 1973, there was no legal requirement to record water rights.) We're using old ASCS aerial photos . . . and we have no information at all about dry land agriculture, which affects watershed hydrology."

Threlkeld sees the satellite data as useful on two levels. "First, we'll do photointerpretation work right off the raw imagery. Say we see that a basin has a lot of irrigated land along with urban build-up; it may be a sensitive area where we need to go in and do some work on flood possibilities or protect existing water rights.

"On the second level, we'll use the digital data as input to our water modelling efforts. We've been using agricultural statistics and disaggregating them by personal knowledge. If we can interface Landsat digital programs with our modelling programs, we can eliminate a lot of human error.

"The only big problem I foresee is detection of sub-irrigated lands (due to a naturally high water table. Use of sub-irrigated lands requires no water rights). Landsat may not distinguish these from those lands irrigated by manmade systems."

Val Morgan, a multi-county supervisor with the Property Assessment Div. of the Dept. of Revenue, says that the sampling procedures used to classify Landsat data may be a big plus to tax assessment. "Before, we re-classified all lands regularly. Now, with Landsat, we may be able to classify only sample points, and then apply the resulting computer classification to an entire scene, possibly giving a higher degree of accuracy. This could mean we could allocate our manpower to ground-truthing, instead of to tedious manual tasks."

The big problem has been that Revenue's manpower hasn't stretched very far in annually re-classifying the whole state, he explains. "We normally assess property using aerial photos to delineate boundaries; then we go out on the ground and check for ground cover type and quality. Sometimes the photos have been ten years old; that's why we use them only for boundaries. The trouble is, with a state of 91 million acres, and usually one or two appraisers for each of 56 counties, it's almost impossible for us to cover the land in the time allowed. We appraise all land as often as we can, which means probably once every five years or less, at best. Our county offices are bogged down in clerical calculations. Landsat should give us more time to get out into the field to do ground checking and photo interpretation."

The data produced by the project will be available to other agencies. Threlkeld remarks that the Dept. of Agriculture is involved in the demo; the Depts. of Lands and of Fish & Game are also watching closely. He feels "others will show up when the results come in."

Demo #3: timber inventory and tax assessment. Montana's third demonstration project, a forest inventory for parts of the 26,000-sq.-mile test site surrounding Bozeman, may be the most visible of the four projects; DNRC's Forestry Div. and the Dept. of Revenue, Property Assessment Div., hope to put together an inventory of state- and privately-owned forest land that could serve as a basis for a resource inventory by DNRC, and tax assessment by Revenue. If the demonstration goes well, they say, the departments could apply the method statewide.

Brian Long, Inventory Coordinator for the Forestry Div., says, "We hope to get a map that gets forest land down to good definition. The ideal would be crown density and some species typing, maybe some size class definition. Whether we can get that, we don't know.

"We're using black-and-white aerial photos now, at different scales. We've done some random sampling, matching grids with ground photos in a double sample. But that doesn't give us a map and that's what we need right now." Val Morgan, assigned by Revenue to the forestry project as well as the agricultural lands inventory, hopes to find similar benefits for tax assessment from both demonstrations. As far as he's concerned, it's Landsat's potential to save manhours that counts.

Demo #4: land use in Cascade County. Montana's fourth demonstration project will produce a land use inventory/classification of Cascade County, centering around the city of Great Falls. Led by John Montgomery of the Cascade County Planning Board and Joe Morris from the Mt. Committee for Rural Development, the venture involves a remarkably high number of other agencies whose concerns focus on the same area: the Great Falls City-County Planning and Health Depts.; Cascade County's Conservation District, Weed Control Board, and Civil Defense Office; Montana Depts. of Community Affairs, Highway, and Fish and Game; USDA's Soil Conservation Service and Forest Service, as well as its State Committee for Rural Development; HUD's Federal Housing Authority.

"Ours is a fairly simple project," explains Montgomery. "We hope to produce an inventory of the county by 10 land use categories, in map-like form; we'll use this for public education on the (Planning) Board's proposals. We may use the digital data later on our own computer, or on DCA's (Geodata System).

"First order land management decisions in planning are possible, but they aren't being made now. The big picture has been lacking. For instance, change detection in land use is a big question, especially changes from range or crop to urban use. We've never had a comprehensive, accurate land use classification in Cascade County or any other county; so we've never been able to measure land use by category, or its percentage of change, the way we'd like to. All counties are doing what we're doing . . . using aerial photos, doing everything manually. So our demonstration may be an important step forward.

"Personally, I'd like to get my feet wet with the (Landsat) technology, determine its potential, so I can be a resource person for other agencies in the county."

Montgomery thinks Landsat's 1-acre resolution may spell some difficulties in urban land classification, but feels it will be more than adequate in rural areas. Like everyone involved in Montana's projects, he sees money as a problem, calling the outlook for large-scale funding "rather bleak." The federal agencies involved in the Cascade County test will relieve the local crunch. "There's bureaucratic hesitation about giving direct monetary support to the Planning Board. So they'll give us some manpower help — in ground truthing, indexing aerial photo files, and so forth."

Dundas notes that two groups concerned with county affairs are watching the Cascade County test closely. The Montana Committee for Rural Development and USDA's Rural Areas Development Committee are involved in the demonstration project and will report its progress to their groups. "If Cascade County goes well, the chance for statewide visibility is pretty good. Those two groups can instruct local county committees or extension agents to follow up on the technology applications."

Montana First to Apply Landsat to Taxes? Speaking of both the agricultural and forest lands inventories, Tom Dundas says, "We think we're the first state to apply Landsat to tax assessment. If it works here, this tool could have national implications . . . for those states who use land classification at the state level."

Val Morgan of Revenue sees implications closer to home. "The project will be reported to the legislature through performance audits done on Revenue by other, non-executive agencies, and through the legislative committees the Division regularly deals with. If we can further the equitability of taxation at lower cost through Landsat, that will be a biggie, especially in light of recent initiatives like Proposition 13 in California. We think as soon as the Montana courts find out it's practical and possible for us to appraise agricultural and timber lands on a yearly basis, they'll ask us to compare digital and conventional methods pretty seriously."

The Dept. of Revenue's share of the land inventory projects involves a unique task: integrating the satellite data into its own computerized data base. "About four years ago, Revenue started the Mass Appraisal Bureau, to be responsible for machine-assisted appraisal statewide. We assign a unique identifier to each parcel; it contains the coordinates for the centroid of the parcel. We're also developing a tax mapping system, at a scale of 1/2000 or less, showing all agricultural, residential, and commercial/industrial parcels identified as such.

"So what we've got is a digital file organized by unique identifiers . . . and also tied to our section corner coordinate file. Interfacing that file with (DCA's) Geodata System will be key in this test project for ownership correlation of Landsat data. It will be a major effort, but a necessary one. For instance, as our identification of rural parcels improves, the problem of tying tracts smaller than a quarter section to owners will disappear; but even now it looks as though there's a direct use of MAB's section corner file for tying into Landsat.

"Our aim is to get (MAB) files into a format that's as accessible for as many users as possible, within the right-to-privacy guidelines we've set up." The Bureau's data base is now completely operational in nine counties, and is picking up about ten counties a year, according to Morgan. "We should be completely operational in all 56 counties in four years, so Landsat should fit into this increasing area very nicely."

Montana's Geo-Data System and How It Grew

"In this project with NASA, we're seeing more cooperation than ever before focussed on the Geo-Data System. Cost has drawn us together . . . and the System is larger now and more useful to many agencies, too," says Tom Dundas. With Dundas as assistant administrator, the Research and Information Div. of Montana's Dept. of Community Affairs developed the Geo-Data System with the idea that it could become a centralized data bank used by all state agencies.

While the agencies involved in the Landsat projects will use their own digital systems for the demonstrations, as well as DCA's, the Geo-Data System will gather information from all of them; some of the tests will involve interfacing different systems to GDS for the first time. Dundas feels the Landsat projects could point out the efficiency of a single information system as a central repository.

Multi-agency use of the GDS has been a long time coming, he admits, but he feels momentum is building. "Agencies need more information than ever before, but the cost of getting that information and storing it is escalating even faster," he says. He describes centralized information systems like those in Arizona and Texas as the way of the future.

"When the Research and Information Div. got going in 1968, it was because DCA had seen that the need for 'spatial information' would grow out of sight within a few years. Since everything we do comes about because of a 'market' in state government, we thought we'd better get ready to handle multiple agencies' needs for data in a sophisticated way.

"The first thing we realized, of course, was that manually-made data, in map form, would be much too cumbersome; plus, we thought pictorial communication would be more effective. We started off with social and economic data in graphic form in 1970. Pretty soon we realized we could display other data this way, too — on soils, wildlife, vegetation, water, all kinds of natural resources. We enlarged to compositing; in 1972 or so, we actually began building the Montana Geo-Data System."

Dundas is encouraged that the System's software, based on an IBM 370 158, is apparently compatible with the VICAR/IBIS package that Jet Propulsion Laboratory will use for processing in the Montana/WRAP demonstration projects. "We don't foresee any problems," remarks Nevin Bryant of JPL. "We think we can feed the demo results right into Tom's system."

Integration of Landsat should add another point of visibility to GDS. Montana is one of perhaps three or four states in the country, according to Dundas, to have a centralized statewide information system stored on computer. The bank also serves as a U.S. Census depository. Representatives of South and North Dakota, Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, and several southwestern states have visited Helena to study Montana's system.

The Geo-Data System is anything but a "black box" exercise at DCA. Dundas has furthered understanding of GDS and drummed up support for it by producing taxpayer-oriented profiles, like where tax money goes in local or county government. "We show taxpayers what their tax dollars buy," says Dundas. "Among other things, we'd like to make them feel that the dollars that go to the Geo-Data System are well-spent.

FS Timber Management Studied

The U.S. Forest Service doesn't know whether it is managing the national forests on a sustained yield basis, and therefore may be undercurting or overcutting, charges a report from the Comptroller General of the United States.

The Comptroller studied Forest Service management of six national forests. His report concluded that forest management plans were sometimes based on weak or unprovable data, some management practices were not given adequate attention and some resource conflicts were not resolved. The report made a number of recommendations for improvement to the Secretary of Agriculture.

The Forest Service responded to a draft of the report, and that is included as an appendix to the report.

Copies of "Timber Harvest Levels for National Forests—How Good Are They?" (Publication CED-78-15) are available for $1.00 from the U.S. General Accounting Office, Distribution Section, P.O. Box 1020, Washington, D.C. 20013.

Transportation Report

"Transportation in Montana," Montana Department of Community Affairs Planning Division, July 1978, 43 pp., free; available from DCA Planning Division, Capitol Station, Helena, MT 59601

This new report surveys public transportation in Montana, with particular attention on the needs of and services for elderly and handicapped Montanans, because these groups are perhaps most dependent on public transportation for daily medical, social and business needs.

The report includes some guidelines for special transportation programs that require capital grant assistance under the UMTA 16 (b) (2) grant program.

PP&L Rule Before PSC

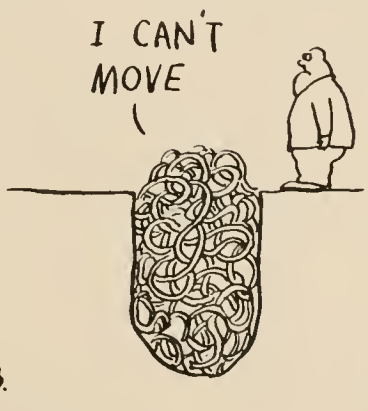
The Public Service Commission will hold hearings in Helena, and Kalispell on its proposed ruling approving Pacific Power and Light's program to provide interest free loans to residential homeowners for insulation and other weatherization materials.

The hearing in Helena will be held September 20, 1978 at 2:00 p.m. in the Commission's Offices, 1227 11th Avenue. The Kalispell hearing will be held September 21, 1978 at 7:00 p.m., Eagle's Lounge, 1st Avenue West and 1st Street.

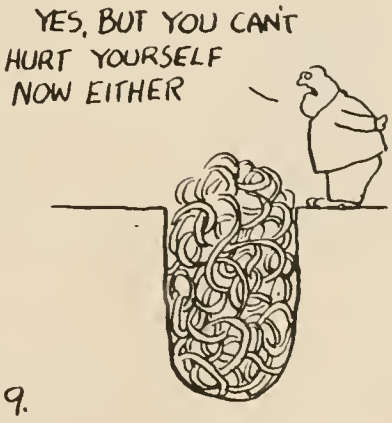
A complete copy of the PP&L proposal may be examined at PP&L's Kalispell Office, 448 So. Main and at the Commission's Offices, 1227 11th Avenue, Helena, Montana.

The Montana Consumer Counsel, 34 West Sixth Avenue, Helena, Montana 59601 (Telephone 449-2771), is available and may be contacted to represent consumer interests in this matter.

7.



8.



9.

Corps Calls Meetings on Dam Sites

The Army Corps of Engineers will hold three public meetings in Montana on its hydro-electric power study in the Flathead-Clark Fork River Basin. The meeting will be: September 26, 7:30 p.m. at the Outlaw Inn in Kalispell; September 27, 7:30 p.m. at the St. Ignatius Community Center, and September 28, 7:30 p.m. at the Hellgate High School in Missoula.

The Corps' study identifies areas in the basin that potentially could supply hydro-electric power to western Montana and the Pacific Northwest, while minimizing adverse environmental and social impacts. Four dam sites have been identified for further study: Buffalo Rapids 2, Sloan Bridge Low, Buffalo Rapids 4 low, Buffalo Rapids 2 plus 4 low.

At the public meetings, the Corps will report on the results of its preliminary studies and receive public comment on the projects. To get a brochure describing the findings of the preliminary studies, or to get more information, contact Colonel John Poteat, Corps of Engineers, P.O. Box C-3755, Seattle, WA 98124/ (206)764-3690.

KEEP Workshop Applications Due

The Cooperative Extension Service will be holding three Group Communication Workshops early next year as part of its Kellogg Extension Education Project (KEEP).

The week-long workshops will train community leaders to work with groups to solve community problems. KEEP will provide training in the Social Action Process, Transactional Analysis and Leadership Styles.

KEEP will pay for travel, food, lodging and course expenses during the workshop; participants pay only a $10 registration fee. Anyone may apply for a space in the workshops; KEEP is especially interested in applications from local, state and federal government officials, community leaders and business people.

The deadline for application is November 15. To apply, or to get more information, contact your County Extension Agent or Rex Campbell, KEEP, 311 Linfield Hall, MSU, Bozeman, MT 59717/994-3706.

10.

11.

12.

LOCAL COMMENT

Flathead County Should Be Zoned

Flathead County should be zoned.

The Kalispell Development Corporation thinks so, the Area-Wide Planning Board thinks so, the Kalispell Chamber of Commerce thinks so.

So do the citizens in the county, who are not protected from commercial developments of any kind going in next to their homes and do not have any building code regulations to insure sound structures.

Our county commissioners are reluctant to zone Flathead County. Their reasons are understandable—to a degree. They claim they will zone on request, but say they do not want to impose building code regulations on some rural dweller who wants to build an addition to his barn.

They also say it is unfair to tell a landowner, who is desperate for money, that he cannot subdivide a portion of his farmland because it is zoned for agricultural use.

This is very conscientious of the commissioners and very wise in an election year, but it is not a good enough reason.

There is no perfectly fair solution that will please every individual involved. But, with good (and we don't mean what we have now) variance boards, intelligent decisions can be made to determine who should get a hardship variance and who is merely out to make a buck at the expense of his neighbors.

Flathead County is booming. Those who saw similar booms in the San Fernando Valley in California and the boom in the Willamette Valley in Oregon know how quickly a paradise can become a pit.

It could happen here. Without zoning, there is no guide for growth. Uncontrolled, unplanned growth could eventually hurt the individuals the commissioners seem so concerned about protecting far worse than zoning would.

The choice is not so difficult after all; orderly growth, or urban sprawl.

Reprinted from the August 9th **Kalispell Daily Inter Lake**

Land Use

Every time a group of residents shows up to complain about a subdivision at a hearing, the same old dilemma raises its head.

You can't control development without zoning, but you can't do what you want with your land with zoning.

Some of the same people who have opposed zoning have objected to unrestrained development in their area.

They point to increased traffic problems, higher government costs, degraded environment, reduced wildlife habitat and interference with agriculture as just a few of the problems that high density development can bring to a relatively pristine area.

However when the chips are down, most residents apparently still oppose zoning as too much government interference with property rights.

One group last year attempted to zone their neighborhood but ran into resistance from ranchers who looked at subdivision development as a way out if the cattle prices dropped too much.

For too many people, land use planning is a question of "you, not me."

No land owner wants to be told what he can't do with his property.

But his neighbor wants to insure his rights are protected.

Unfortunately there just isn't a way to force your neighbors to zone, without you doing it too.

While this game is going on, the eastern half of the county is being carved up in a building boom that exceeded anyone's expectations.

By the time the zoning question is settled, it will be too late.

Reprinted from the August 6th **Bozeman Daily Chronicle**

Straw May Warm Fort Benton

"Agricultural residue" may seem too fancy a term for plain old straw. But if Jerry Plunkett has his way, farmers and ranchers in the Fort Benton area may soon be treating agricultural residue with more respect, because it will represent a cash crop, not a nuisance.

Plunkett, director of the Butte-based Montana Energy Research and Development Institute, has proposed a project to turn the excess straw that farmers now must cart away and dispose of, into fuel for a community heating plant for Fort Benton. Fort Benton would gain a steady source of heat, local farmers and ranchers would make some extra money and dispose of a burdensome task and an inexpensive renewable energy resource would replace costly fossil fuels.

And if you didn't think straw would supply enough heat, the project proposal estimates that the Fort Benton area could supply *ten times* the heat necessary to warm area homes. It claims straw could be exported to other communities, too, " . . . at a price that is very competitive with coal."

The total project may cost over $2,000,000 including developing and constructing systems for collecting and storing the straw, burning it and delivering heat to area homes through hot water circulation as planned. Fort Benton would eventually purchase and operate the facility.

Plunkett has applied to state and federal sources for grants to begin the project.

MONTANA PLANNING NEWS

DCA Planning Division
Capitol Station
Helena MT 59601

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 2
Helena, Mt.
59601

Montana Planning News

from the Montana State Library

This cover sheet created by Internet Archive for formatting.